

Notes from Archives Sector Development discussion with TNA

‘CLOA Executive Attendees – Diana Shelton, Grant Aitken, Ian Brooke, Iain Varah, John Fuller, Lisa Dodd-Mayne, Mark Allman, Nigel Lynn, Richard Hunt, Vincent Paliczka, Heidi Bellamy.

TNA – Oliver Morley, Carol Tullo, Isobel Siddons

Oliver Morley Chief Executive & Keeper welcomed the ‘CLOA Executive to The National Archives and outlined the key focus TNA as being sustainability. TNA has developed a new self-improvement framework, [Accreditation](#), to ensure a standard across the sector, and to support sustainability. TNA supports different models from large local authority services to small independent archives and also supports archives to work collaboratively with other service areas. Refer to [Archives for the 21st Century in action: refreshed](#) for more details on strategic priorities. He emphasised that whilst it was important to ensure the statutory aspects were working well, TNA was keen to help archives demonstrate their wider benefit; liberating their value at the lowest cost.

IV - gave positive feedback on the support provided by TNA in terms of the modernisation agenda; this was echoed by the entire Executive.

The following comments were made and questions asked:

OM – There are issues around cloud archiving, you need to know that you can get it out.

IS – TNA has launched a [wiki](#) to share good practice.

NL – noted the ability of TNA to pull-out ‘nuggets of gold’ and create public interest.

RH – noted that LA’s also hold records that could be used to generate stories with local interest.

IS – Appraised the group of the [Explore Your Archive](#) toolkit, which offers guidance on how to involve your press team, identify the hooks in a story.

Action – HB to include information on this resource in next ‘CLOA e-bulletin.

OM – highlighted how TNA are working to enhance the online experience for community/family/local history using social media including [Flickr](#) (*World through a lens* initiative) In general archives are expanding from ‘academic’ interest towards creating a more general interest. TNA also use Twitter a lot; whilst OM understands that LA’s have challenges around the use of social media, archives should be perceived a non-political a resource.

Carol Tullo (CT), Director of Information Policy and Services and Isobel Siddons (IS), Head of Engagement then gave a presentation entitled *The National Archives and local government archive services*. See the presentation in conjunction with the additional notes below.

Slide 1 – In terms of a leadership role, TNA aim to ensure that archive services are contemporary and relevant, bringing economic and social cohesion. TNA have statutory and legal responsibilities as a government department. National asset that underpins the business of government, archiving census records, military records etc. But these records all contain stories such as that surrounding the release of [19th century immigrant’s records](#)

TNA looks at records from other government departments first from the perspective of National sensitivity/security, then from a cataloguing perspective to pull out interesting stories.

Slide 2 - National for policy, but shaped by concerns that come in from local archives. Local authority archives are the backbone of the archive ecosystem. Archives are a key part of the culture sector and also about evidence and information – for example planners really depend on their archive colleagues for their work (information, transparency, business).

Slide 3 - TNA recognise that in the shifting economic climate there will be differing models for service delivery. The new sector standard, [accreditation](#) will help with quality assurance. Collection and stores are important, but so too is how you use archives, efficient management, planning and involving users.

Slide 4 – TNA have a comprehensive and considered offer to support the sector.

Slide 5 – The Engagement Team can support archives in challenge or crisis, but are keen to also keen to work with those innovators who want to push the boundaries.

Slide 6 & 7 - Sustainability – As part of their support for archives, The National Archives are offering a seminar for local authority archive services on positive positioning within a service review.

Action – HB to include information on these seminars in next 'CLOA e-bulletin.

TNA have also compiled [guidance](#) on what to think through if you are considering a Trust, which offers a helpful prompt on some of the issues and also some of the special concerns relating to archives.

TNA have been working to research what the current trends and future user base will look like – this has resulted in delivery of some training sessions by the Audience Agency. The training sessions are complete, but resources are available: which will be published [here](#). To further help archives identify funding and diversify income streams a Funding Advisor will soon be appointed. This role will have a remit to help the sector broaden its funding base and develop relationships with funders. Training will also be offered to help the sector develop the skills they need to tap into other sources.

NL – asked about income generation through the online archives offer and whether TNA have considered sponsorship and advertising?

CT – responded that it sits uncomfortably, but in terms of the future it hasn't been discounted. It is a recognised opportunity, but needs careful management.

IS – clarified that TNA have a whole focus on commercial income generation that is being shared with the sector.

NL – enquired whether this included charging policies for the future?

IS – expanded on the requirement for openness and transparency of records for enquiries. However, some archives are looking at basic support for enquiries, but if people want a '[who do you think you are](#)' experience then an hourly charge could be made.

Furthermore there is some research on the value of Friend's group's about to be published – this guidance will focus on maximising the potential for generating income with options and case studies to help LA's make informed decisions. Many archives don't have a

fundraising/income generation strategy, so a key role for TNA is to help them develop a coherent approach.

IS – As an aside, the easiest way to make money is to compile a DVD of local railway footage – experience shows these fly of the shelf!

Action – IS to send to HB for cascade once research is published.

RH – noted there was a real opportunity for archives to be more proactive in balancing the way they are funded.

CT – differentiated between funding and fundraising and mentioned TNA's work to build a consortium of archives and negotiate a good contracts and rates with commercial providers who are working to get a better contract deal.

IV – Noted that whilst TNA have modernised there are still some archivists working within LA's that operate a more traditional model.

IS – highlighted Major archive project learning extract ([MAPLE](#)) – as an example of how mentoring can take place. This focuses on how you develop a vision for your archive, how you get your senior management team on-board. It uses the peer group to move the collective thinking, the innovators acting as the spearhead of the profession.

Action – TNA to engage through 'CLOA to cascade the offer; this way we can better ensure that at Head of Service level the opportunities are flagged up.

Slide 8 - CT talked about the 20 year rule. From 1 January 2013, the government begins its move towards releasing records when they are 20 years old, instead of 30. Lots of activity to accelerate this within government departments, but it's a legally controlled task.

There are 90 LA repositories that it affects. You can find out more [here](#).

TNA are working with colleagues in LA's, courts of law and the NHS to do a burdens/impact assessment. In the Autumn TNA anticipate presenting some options to government, and want to avoid having records in Places of Deposit (PoD) out of kilter with central government. TNA are also concerned that this is an additional burden as many of the PoD's are undergoing strategic re-organisations.

IV – asked why census data can't be released earlier.

CT – highlighted that census legislation is strict; 100 year rule that can't be breached.

However, some of the restrictions on data make less sense now and so the Office of National Statistics are reviewing this in the light of how much information people put in the public domain themselves anyway. The Freedom of Information centre deals with thousands of requests, but much of this is controlled by what can be released. The 1911 census has been released and TNA are working through 1921 at the moment.

IB – summarised the session as interesting and informative. He congratulated the TNA in as much as the 31% cuts have not impacted on the service or support on offer.

CT – thanked him, but added that engagement is a priority activity, so TNA have worked hard to find other ways of making the savings such as a reduced head count, closing the buildings on Mondays.

RH – thanked the TNA for hosting a productive discussion session, and re-iterated 'CLOA's intention to work in partnership with TNA on driving forward sector improvement.

A tour of the National Archives followed.